

Young Men  
and Foreign  
• Missions •

---



By  
President George A. Gates  
of Pomona College  
California



# YOUNG MEN AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

*By* PRES. GEORGE A. GATES  
*of Pomona College, California*

An Address given at the Annual Meeting  
of the American Board of Commis-  
sioners for Foreign Missions at  
Seattle, Washington,  
Sept. 15, 1905.

BOSTON  
Published by the American Board  
1905



# Young Men and Foreign Missions.

---

BY PRES. GEORGE A. GATES.

---

The American Board was created, under God, by young men. If ever it should become peculiarly the special charge of chiefly old men, that would be a curious inversion. Yet as one observes the constituency of the corporate membership, as one notes the fact that it is mainly older and even old men and women in our churches who are especially interested in this department of the work of our churches; as one cannot fail to perceive that it is these same older people who are most largely the contributors to this work, one is not surprised that this hour has been set apart for this special matter. All honor to the veterans among us who have grown older in this service. All their wisdom and consecration are needed and appreciated.

It would not be surprising if it were found to be true that the interest of these faithfuls began in their youth. That kind of sturdy tree was not created outright. It grew, and is strong because it grew. If there be a work "under the all-beholding sun" which demands the special characteristics of youth,—zeal, tirelessness, the hopefuluess that declines to recognize repeated and prolonged defeat, shrinks from no physical hardships, rejoices in superhuman consecration to a high purpose,—such a work is foreign missions in the field of its operations. In saying this, one of course does not overlook the fact that scores of men and women no longer young are now in the foreign work, having added the wisdom of experience and maturity to the fires of youth under which they gave themselves.

#### OFFICERED BY OLDER PERSONS.

We are thus face to face with an anomaly: An institution and cause born of the consecration of noble youth and dependent particularly on qualities of youth, supported and officered at

home, nevertheless, largely by others than young men and women. This fact has been recognized and dealt with in the past. Young men are found among the officers of the board. The present problem is to push the same movement out among the younger men in our churches.

The cause needs and urgently needs the added support of a great body of young men. Let us face the fact that the young men of our churches are not being enlisted in the support of missions as they must be if the ranks of the sustaining force at home are to be maintained in their normal strength. Still less are these ranks being increased proportionately to the normal demands of the widening work. That is so plain a fact that one would affront the intelligence of this audience to waste words in support of it.

Let us be clear as to what we are talking about.

By "young men" we mean what the Romans meant not mere boys, but men from 18 to 40, men in whom the enthusiasms of youth are still dominant and formative.

By "in foreign missions" we mean in this present discussion not young men to go out as missionaries, but the young men of our churches to support by their interest and by their gifts the foreign missions department of the church. So narrow is this present subject matter I will confine myself to two points:

### AN AGE OF YOUNG MEN.

First, the universally recognized fact that we live in an age of young men. The world of business affairs has latterly as never before been finding that out. The works, little less than mighty, of modern corporate enterprise are drawing on the strongest young men of our country. The gigantic engineering triumphs are wrought by young men. The inventions under which physical forces are discovered and harnessed to controlled use, by which daily life is becoming more than royally rich, are mostly the work of young men. The world of affairs, of applied science, of bringing things to pass—that world is making no such prime blunder as to



neglect young men. That practical world cannot afford to do so. It needs the liveliest, strongest, most efficient service and it knows where to go to get it. It actually gets it.

To come nearer our immediate concern. In many lines of religious life and work the last quarter century has learned much. Since the boyhood of men of middle life great changes have come in the phenomenal growth of Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association work: there are in the world about 7,000 Young Men's Christian Associations. They own more than 800 buildings, three-fourths of them in America, whose value is \$33,000,000. That amount of money is about the total expenditure of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions from its beginning. The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor is only a quarter century old. There have come along the Young People's Baptist Union, Epworth League and the whole host of others. That persistently recurrent letter Y in all these stands

for — well, what does it stand for? Some crudities sometimes, doubtless. But for boundless energy, confidence, in the end achievement every time. If there is failure here and there, there is recovery too, renewed activity and final success.

The works of young people in religious lines grow almost beyond the ability of statistics to keep up with them.

#### PASTORS NEGLECT CHANCES.

Now is there any question but that foreign missions is somewhat failing to get its share of this splendid life? Of course foreign missions plays its part in all these organizations of young people. They have their committees on foreign missions, and make their contributions, but are they not, nevertheless, far, far short of what they might be in this regard? There is but one answer from any honest and adequate observer.

At whose door lies the blame for this lack? I can find no other answer that is fair and true but this: At last it is the pastor's fault largely — dare one

say? Some of us do know that large numbers of our pastors are not awake to this opportunity. If the pastor be unintelligent or indifferent about this vital branch of the function of the modern church, of course the people will be so, and especially the young people. "What touches me not, troubles me not," says a German proverb. The young people of our churches can be led into enthusiastic interest in foreign missions. But the minister must, here as elsewhere, take the lead in knowledge and interest.

But parents are to blame, too. Children are quick to feel where their parents' real interests lie. In hundreds of our homes the children are trained to persistent interest in foreign missions, but in thousands the children are not so trained.

But what more can the Board do? Much has been done. The movement to get individual churches to support individual missionaries would seem to be wholly good. It is proving successful. For young people especially concrete causes and cases are immeasurably

more appealing. The Board is just now adopting a distinct policy of "working the field" of young men in our churches. Ways will be found to carry out this policy. It has already been found that response from strong, business-like young men will not be lacking when once they can be led to see what this work is.

### THE APPEAL TO YOUNG MEN.

But I come to the main point I would emphasize—the ground of appeal to young men. I deliberately pass by the great appeal on which all missions rest—the call of God to man to help his needier fellow man. Rather I do not pass it by, but assume it. Assumed also is the appeal from the successes of missions, for this argument after nigh a hundred years is not ashamed in any court of inquiry. But I stand here to lay emphasis on one point: *The solemn contract under which the young men of our churches are to support the American Board.*

And what can one mean by that? Does one say there is no such contract,

nor indeed any contract? Let us see about that. Three years ago occurred the great coal strike in the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania. It was coal miners on one side, owners of mine and railroad on the other. It was mid-winter. Boston and New Haven and New York were beginning to suffer. The poor especially were in dire straits. Even schools, churches and hospitals were running out of fuel. City councils acted. Governors of states pleaded with the parties to the strife to save them from freezing. But the miners would not dig coal. They said no law and no person could compel them. The railway magnates, who also owned the coal mines, replied that whether whole statefuls of people froze was no legal affair of theirs; they couldn't furnish coal if the miners wouldn't dig it. "We have entered into no contract to furnish coal to New York City."

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT.

Then something happened—something that helped the world on a step. The constitution doubtless does not con-

fer the right on the President to summon parties to a quarrel to Washington. But Mr. Roosevelt did ask miners and owners to Washington. Thank God, we are not so democratic that a President's invitation of that sort is much short of a command. The men went. Underneath all the interview, the substance of the President's attitude was: "You go back and dig and carry coal. My people are freezing. You can argue and readjust or fight at some more convenient time. But now you men put coal into those cities."

They tried to convince him it was impossible; they had a quarrel with each other. There was only one reply: "My people are freezing. You get them coal." Then the mine owners rose in their dignity as American citizens and haughtily said: "We are not compelled to do so. We never contracted to furnish a pound of coal to New York City. The mines and railroads are our own, to do with as we please." But they did, nota bene, go back and get coal to the freezing people. They did it right off! The two parties argued out their quarrel at their leisure.

Had they not proceeded at once to furnish coal it is not the least unlikely that the President would have assumed a constitutional role about which there would be no argument, namely, nothing other than that of commander-in-chief of the United States army. For soldiers can persuade to mine coal and run railway trains when the people are freezing.

### CONTRACT WITH HUMANITY.

That is: There are contracts immeasurably more binding than any ever written on paper. There is a "contract" to the effect that the railways centering in New York City shall carry fuel to freezing folks, milk to dying babies, food to starving people. It doesn't have to be written. Constitution, laws, "private business" are as nothing compared to that contract. It is written in the nature of modern civilization, in the stars of heaven, in the hearts of men, in the purpose of God.

A similar contract exists between parents and their children. Parents do not sign a contract to do well by their

children. But such a contract inheres in every marriage. It is so much more binding than any paper agreement that no one would ever think of so flimsy a thing as a piece of paper with writing on it, in that connection.

Exactly similar is the unwritten but real contract into which our churches have entered.

It is binding between us and, first, the missionaries.

The churches have bound themselves to stand by those who, giving up all else, went away. They went out trusting in the sacredness of that contract between themselves and not merely those then living, but also their successors in the church membership. It is a timeless contract. This kind does not outlaw. The churches of to-day are under contract with the missionaries of two or three generations ago that their planting will be cherished. There is a whole army of saints, nigh a hundred years of them, all holding this sacred bond with succeeding generations of us.

This contract is binding in a second way, between us and the peoples to



whom the missionaries have gone. Those converts have broken with their own, in many instances at a cost we at home can never appreciate. They have given of their means, helped to build "plants;" cast in their fortunes and those of their families and descendants with the new. We cannot make of such a contract so light a thing as to think we meet it by putting a 50-cent piece upon the contribution plate because it happens to be going around. In common decency must the young men coming to the fore of life recognize the obligation of holiest contract with what their fathers have done.

To the strong young men of these later generations the foreign missions of our churches are not a matter of sentiment. It is plain business, a clear-cut business obligation. This does not mean that the holiest sentiment and loftiest ideals are any more absent from our great cause than they ever were. Quite the contrary. The beauty and the glory of it grow with every added year. But over and above all sentiment the solemn pressure of the cosmic con-

tract resting upon the young people of each succeeding generation grows also.

There is nothing exceptional in this. The rewards of God's world are rewards in kind. The pay we get for doing good work is the chance to do some more and better. The reward of self-sacrifice is the chance to be more devoted and so enter into higher joy of it. The reward of generosity is just the chance to be more generous. So the fidelity of the young men of former generations and the loyalty of the hosts of their converts is not to free us from burdens, but to spur us to bear faithfully the burdens of the inheritance they have bequeathed us.

They laid out roads through the wilderness of darkness and superstition, ignorance and awful wrong; it is ours to finish these roads and maintain them. They laid foundations in confidence of superstructure; we must build thereon or proclaim ourselves defaulters of business obligations, and none the less "business" that they are also of the highest spiritual content. To doubt the validity of such an appeal is to doubt

the integrity of the human mind and the power of right motive. If the argument of such facts and their relations to the present and coming generations can get the ear of young men, the response cannot fail.

## HEATHENDOM AND HEATHENISM VS. CHRISTIANITY.

There is a third item in this contract with the young men of this generation ; it is with their own and their children's future upon the earth. To any thoughtful observer it must appear that this world is approaching some measure of climax in the age-long struggle between Christianity and heathenism. On the one side are ranged both that heathendom that lies geographically beyond the borders of civilization and that heathenism that has grown fat not only *in* but *on* the very opportunities created by Christian civilization, viz.: the opportunities of great wealth born out of discovering and harnessing the forces of

nature. On the other side is the "kingdom of God wherein dwelleth righteousness." There is coming rapidly either the tyranny and slavery of heathendom and heathenism or that broad democracy of the gospel of the Savior of ALL mankind. *There* is a contract into which every young man, whether of our churches or not, must enter, with his own business and social future and his children's. Toward the perpetuation of the darkness or the coming of the light each man must work. It is safe to assert that the most conserving and integrating force in the present stage of building the human race is foreign missions. Like the sunshine, its work is noiseless, patient, effective.

But to the *Christian* young man comes the appeal above all others of a "contract" with the Lord Jesus Christ. That contract, if one may reverently dare so bold a figure, is stamped with the blood-red seal of Calvary. He has redeemed this world — not a part of it, but all of it. The Christian young man has entered into contract with Him to help no less a work than world redemp-

tion. How dare any young man range his work, influence, plain money gifts to any lower scale? To that high purpose, "the love of Christ *constrains*" him and us all.

Send contributions for the work of the  
American Board to

FRANK H. WIGGIN, Treasurer,  
Congregational House, Boston

---

The literature, leaflets and letters of the  
American Board may be had by addressing

MR. JOHN G. HOSMER, Congregational  
House, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Or at the offices of the District Secretaries:

REV. C. C. CREEGAN, D.D., 4th Avenue and  
22d Street, New York City.

REV. A. N. HITCHCOCK, Ph.D., 153 La Salle  
Street, Chicago, Ill.

REV. H. MELVILLE TENNEY, Y. M. C. A.  
Building, San Francisco, Cal.

### "THE MISSIONARY HERALD."

Single subscriptions, 75 cents; in clubs of  
ten, 50 cents each.

### 'FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give, devise and bequeath unto the  
"American Board of Commissioners for For-  
eign Missions," incorporated in Massachu-  
setts in 1812, the sum of.....  
dollars, to be expended for the appropriate  
objects of said corporation.



